

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

April 3, 2007

7:00 PM

Mayor Guinta called the meeting to order.

Mayor Guinta called for the Pledge of Allegiance, which was led by Alderman Garrity.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll. Thirteen Aldermen were present.

Present: Aldermen Roy, Gatsas, Long, Duval, Osborne, Pinard, O’Neil, Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith, Forest.

Absent: Alderman Thibault

Mayor Guinta advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Guinta requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Melanie Latulippe, 75 Jones Street, Manchester, NH (Re: Hallsville Roof) stated: I am a parent of two Hallsville Elementary students. The reason for me speaking this evening is, Mr. Mayor and the Board of Aldermen, I would like to thank you as a parent and as a member of the parent/teacher group. Thank you for allocating funds for our roof. Thank you for all your hard work and Alderman Shea, dedication. Mr. Davenport and the faculty at Hallsville Elementary School, I’d like to thank you all. Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Pinard, duly seconded by Alderman Roy, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

Alderman Lopez asked do you think we could have unanimous consent to move to allow the MTA to make a presentation?

Mayor Guinta responded sure, I'd be happy to invite MTA to come up ahead of time and present their presentation to us now.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted by unanimous consent to allow the MTA to make a presentation updating the Board on their plans to implement the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) prepared by Edwards & Kelcey through Southern NH Planning Commission.

Mr. David Smith, Executive Director of the Manchester Transit Authority, stated Aldermen, thank you for your patience. With me tonight is Karen Bennett, Assistant Executive Director. We're here to give you a brief update on the Comprehensive Operations Analysis and our plans to implement the study recommendations. You received a presentation from the consultant from Edwards & Kelcey late last spring and in that presentation the consultant went through, route by route, to explain what his findings were and a preliminary review of the routes. I'll spare you that tonight. I'll not go through the detailed route by route analysis unless you have any questions about a particular route. We can flash that up for you. But I do just want to give you a brief update on where we are. As you recall, the Comprehensive Operations Analysis was a thorough study of routes and schedules and it involved several activities that were undertaken both by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission and Edwards & Kelcey Consultants. They involved passenger on/off counts by bus stop and by time of day so that we could have a composite picture of ridership and when it occurred – where it was strong, where it was weak. It included onboard customer surveys, not only to assess trip-making habits of people who were riding at that time, but also what their desires were and what their unmet needs were. And it involved a transfer analysis so that we could assess how best to connect services throughout the City. The findings were reported to you last spring, and again, I'll be very brief. The consultant found that the route running times were inaccurate and this led to a problem of reliability. In many cases traffic over the years had changed the running time sufficiently that inadequate time was created for the routes, which led to unreliability. It also found that, because the routes were tied so tightly or the running times were tied so tightly, from one route to another that, where there was a problem with a running time on a route, if there was a delay incurred, that tended to cascade through the day because there was no recovery time built

into the schedule. In addition the consultant felt that the routes were incorrect, that there were too many large loops. These loops largely were created when two routes were combined into one and prior services changed. Those created difficulty in providing indirect trips and inconvenience for passengers. As well, the consultant found that in some cases transferring from one area of town to another was inconvenient and created, in some cases, long waits between routes connecting downtown. In addition, based on that on/off survey, the consultant found that there were some unproductive routes and route segments. The recommendations were submitted to the Planning Commission and MTA last summer in July. The recommendations were to adjust running times to improve reliability and where currently the route round trip running times vary from 45 minutes, to 50 minutes, to one hour, it was recommended that all routes operate at a one hour round trip frequency, with some recovery time built into each trip. In some cases that meant shortening a route where it's difficult to make an hour round trip currently, and in some cases it meant lengthening a route in order to apply the proper running time. In addition, it recommended a new hub at Veterans Park and Center of New Hampshire, with buses meeting at the hub at the half-hour. Initially the consultant recommended that all but one route, that is twelve routes, depart from Veterans Park and Center of New Hampshire every sixty minutes, or thirty minutes after the hour. The consultant recommended that one route be offset at a thirty minute frequency, leaving on the hour, and that being the South Beech, to permit a thirty minute frequency to be operated from downtown to the Mall of New Hampshire, which is one of our heavy destinations. After looking at the consultant's recommendations and working through our effort at staff level, we determined that there were some problems in operating twelve buses from Veterans Park and Center of New Hampshire on the half hour, one of them being space. We're recommending that nine routes operate at thirty minutes after the hour and four routes operate on the hour. The consultant recommended a weekday span of service very similar to the current span of service, from 5:30 am to 6:30 PM. We currently have a span of service from 5:30 am to 7:00 PM. The Saturday span of service is recommended from 8:00 am to 5:30 PM, and that's very similar to the span of service today. Following the receipt of the consultant's recommendations there was a significant amount of work to do. While the consultant did estimate running times on the route recommendations that were made, actual running times had not been assessed. We needed to look at the route recommendations in detail from a safety perspective and operating perspective. We gathered together a group including representatives from the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission, our staff and some of our drivers, and worked through the fall and early winter to develop detailed recommendations from the consultant's recommendations. In some respects, there are minor differences from the consultant's recommendations, and I'll talk about those briefly. The first is, as I mentioned, not all of the buses would be leaving on the half hour, that twelve buses converging on downtown at one time and leaving at one time not only is a space problem at Center of New Hampshire and Veterans Park, but also adds to traffic at that time. Additionally, two of the routes which are loop routes now: the route seven Veterans Hospital route and the

route nine DW Highway and River Road route were recommended to change, but only in a minor way. While the consultant recommended two-way service, it still resulted in big zigzags that provided indirect service. In working with drivers and staff and doing running times in those areas, we realized that we could break those routes up and have actually created two routes from the route seven Veterans Hospital route. One would go directly out Bridge Street to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic and one would go directly out the Prospect Street and Smyth Road to the VA hospital. And one would go to Southern New Hampshire University directly up River Road, and splitting that from the DW Highway, which would go out to Northside Plaza on DW Highway. All four of those are now half-hour routes rather than two hourly round trip routes. We did some advertising recently. We put flyers on the buses. We let people know that we were going to be having a public hearing. We put out as much public information as we could. A show was done on MCTV and we invited folks to a public hearing last Friday, which was held here in your chambers during the afternoon. We had about twenty or twenty-five riders and residents show up. Overall, the response was supportive; riders generally see improvements. However, there were specific concerns in some areas and we've promised to consider and address those concerns. Those concerns were: service to Colonial Village, which had been proposed to be eliminated and left operating just north and south on River Road; service to Hesser College; Saturday service on route eleven Front Street, which was recommended to be eliminated by the consultant; service on Milford Street and Rockland Street on the West Side; service to St. Anselm College; and service on a small loop operating off of route four, Page route, which loops on Massabesic, Belmont, Summer and Old Falls. It's a small loop that incorporates a number of City housing sites. As I said, we received very good comment, very considerate comment, and the staff has promised to take that back and consider it and to make recommendations to the Board regarding those requests. Written public comments are received through April 15th, and we will be making recommendations to the Board for their decision on April 24th. Prior to the meeting we did distribute to you a larger packet which includes the maps and schedules, and if anybody has any specific questions, we would be happy to answer them at this time.

Alderman DeVries stated thank you, Your Honor. David, if my recollection serves me correct, at one point there was discussion about utilizing, I think, the step saver as a smaller connector to kind of customize service. Is that part of what was looked at with the consultant?

Mr. Smith stated yes, there was that idea proposed for some areas. It's basically kind of a free-floating dial a ride route. The consultant called it a flex route. In other words, it would operate out to a certain point with a regular route with a certain time schedule, and then beyond that point it would be based on call-in service. The consultant's recommendations prior to the final recommendation, a recommendation was made in late June/early July which basically preserved the current

level of service but, however, it increased the cost by about \$200,000. We gave the consultant the charge of finding a way to incorporate as many of his recommendations as possible within the current budget level and not increase the budget by \$200,000. In his final recommendations he eliminated that recommendation for flex service.

Alderman DeVries stated so the additional cost would have been \$200,000. Were there any projections of what type of ridership increase that might have brought? Is that possible...

Mr. Smith stated there were but I don't recall them offhand.

Alderman DeVries asked it wasn't substantial?

Mr. Smith responded it was not substantial.

Alderman Osborne stated the Valley Street Stop & Shop situation. Has that been remedied?

Mr. Smith stated no, it has not at this point. We've worked with the developers from the beginning of their project two years ago. We're just about to that point. The developers do want us to install a shelter, and in fact we're meeting with the shelter company tomorrow, Signal Advertising. Our plan is not to remain on Valley Street but to turn in where the shelter used to be, to go down to the front of the store and along the front of the store and out on Wilson. In fact, they invited us to do that right at the outset, before they began construction. We've just been waiting for their go ahead to do it.

Alderman Osborne stated so you think this would be done, at the end this would all take place.

Mr. Smith stated it should be done well before that. We're expecting within the next few weeks.

Alderman Smith stated David, on route thirteen, South River Road and Bedford Highlands Shopping Center, is there any reason why you're not going to utilize Boynton Street? I noticed you're turning left onto Woodbury and down to Second Street, and the previous run always went up Boynton Street and back.

Mr. Smith stated it went one way on Boynton Street in the morning and the other way in the afternoon, and then it was on Boynton Street in one direction, morning and afternoon, and it flipped during the day. The reason was because the ridership was relatively low on Boynton Street. One of the objectives the consultant had was to create a system in which

service operated both ways on the same street, rather than operating out on one street and back on another, and that was one of those cases. His recommendation was to go to Main Street. We did make one modification and that is to operate up and down Woodbury rather than going to Second Street as we do now. Woodbury would take us up to the intersection of Main and Boynton, and we do have riders in that area.

Alderman Smith stated I was under the assumption that this is one of the highest routes in the City as far as patrons. Am I correct or wrong?

Mr. Smith stated you're correct. Most of those patrons are centered downtown and in the area of CMC and West High, and then farther out at the shopping destinations – Hannafords, Wal-Mart and Bedford Mall.

Alderman Roy stated David, I was very happy to see that the number one on your concern list was the Colonial Village. We've spoken about that and all I can say on behalf of the constituents that can't get to a public hearing or can't come see you unless you give them a ride, please, whatever you can do to continue the Colonial Village loop. It is a nice, multi-family development in Ward One and Ward Three so there's a lot of people serviced.

Mr. Smith stated we heard from several Colonial Village residents, as well as several Hesser College students.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Pinard, duly seconded by Alderman Roy, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk